

New London County Historical Society

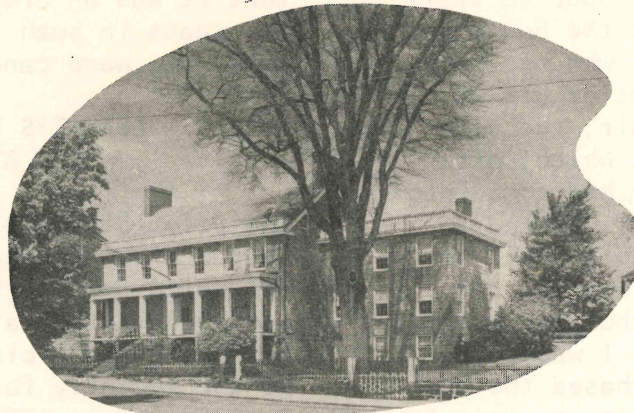
11 Blinman Street

SHAW MANSION

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SOCIETY TO HONOR LINCOLN AT ANNUAL MEETING

A talk on "Lincoln and His Religion" will be presented at the annual meeting of the Society on Tuesday, September 22nd by Dr. Richard Lowitt, Assistant Professor of History at Connecticut College.

This program will highlight the Society's participation throughout the year in the 150th anniversary of the birth of Abraham Lincoln. Pictures and documents relating to various chapters of his life will be displayed at the Shaw Mansion for the remainder of the year.

Lincoln's non-membership in any church was used against him in his political campaigns. A Springfield neighbor remembered Lincoln as often saying that when he discovered a church whose creed was the Golden Rule, he would unite with it.

Lincoln's faith was a process of growth through doubts and bitter trials and personal sorrows. Stages in his progress were marked by deeply emotional experiences.

Dr. Lowitt taught at the University of Rhode Island, City College of New York, and the University of Maryland before coming to Connecticut College in 1954. His publications include "A Merchant Prince

of the 19th Century" and "George W. Norris and Agricultural Relief During the Twenties."

A business meeting and election of officers will precede Dr. Lowitt's talk. A social hour will follow.

CHAIR CANED BY LINCOLN IN POSSESSION OF WOODSTOCK RESIDENT

Back in 1915 Hamilton Holt, then editor of the Independent, a New York weekly, was fortunate enough to discover and purchase an authentic Lincoln relic, which is now in the possession of his sister, Miss Constance Holt of Woodstock.

Mr. Holt's daughter, Beatrice Holt Rosenthal of Waterford, has loaned us the documents tracing the background for the purchase of this interesting treasure, and with her permission we quote from one of Mr. Holt's letters as follows:

"While lecturing in Old Salem, Illinois, before the Chautauqua in 1915, I found that Abraham Lincoln lived there in the thirties, and many old landmarks were pointed out to me in connection with him. I, being something of an antique furniture enthusiast, inquired in the neighborhood if it were possible at this late day to procure any Lincoln relics, and they said probably everything was taken up, but that

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there was a family of Bishop brothers who lived in the village of Petersburg, a mile or two away, who had many Lincoln relics in the past, and perhaps still had some. I had only about an hour to visit the Bishops, but called at the house and found one of the brothers, who was paralytic. All I could get out of him was that they had left one chair, the seat of which Lincoln had made, which, after Lincoln had left Old Salem had come into his father's possession. I offered to buy it, but he would not sell until he had consulted the brother who was not there. By chance the brother was pointed out to me on the street as I was going to the station, and I purchased the chair from him, which he sent on to me in a few weeks. He also promised to send a history of the chair signed before a notary for its authentication, but, though I wrote to him several times, I could get nothing further out of him. About six months later, being in Springfield, Illinois, and having a few hours at my disposal, I took the train out to Petersburg in order to get the authentication from him myself. I found that the older brother had died in the meantime and that the brother from whom I had bought the chair was not in town that day. I went to some lawyers who promised to get the authentication from Mr. Bishop for me and they also gave the address of the brothers' older sister, a Mrs. Annett Bishop Robertson, who lived in Springfield, Illinois. Upon my return to Springfield I went out to Mrs. Robertson's and got her to give me the history of the chair which I have signed and acknowledged in my possession. A little later the lawyers in Petersburg procured for me the history of the chair from Mr. J.C. Bishop. He was the youngest of the family and the daughter the oldest, and while their recollections apparently differ in unimportant details, in the main they are agreed that it is a genuine Lincoln relic. I inquired in Petersburg and found that their father and Lincoln were close friends.

The same afternoon I saw Mrs. Bishop in Springfield I went out to the cemetery where Lincoln is buried. There is a room

in the mausoleum devoted to Lincoln memorabilia, and there I found an old chair of the exact design and period as the chair I purchased from Mr. Bishop except that it was an arm chair and mine was not. The seats in both chairs, as far as I could make out, were caned exactly alike."

LEAGUE'S SUMMER MEETING HELD AT MANSFIELD

The July 18th meeting of the Connecticut League of Historical Societies, originally scheduled for Old Sturbridge, Massachusetts, was held instead at the First Congregational Church in Mansfield, where we were guests of the recently formed Mansfield Historical Society. This infrequently visited corner of Connecticut provided a beautiful setting for a most enjoyable meeting.

Two excellent talks featured the program. Mr. Jerauld A. Manter presented an illustrated history of the University of Connecticut. He traced its growth from the Storrs Agricultural College, established in 1881 by Augustus and Charles Storrs to its present status as a State supported university. The development of the land as well as the study program was most interestingly shown in black and white and color pictures.

Mr. Bernhard Knollenberg, the speaker for the afternoon session, presented a scholarly explanation of Nathan Hale's rapid elevation in military rank, and traced the growth of the legend surrounding the famous last words of the Connecticut Revolutionary hero. Many members visited the Hale home-
stead at South Coventry following the meeting as guests of the Antiquarian and Landmarks Society.

PROGRESS REPORTED ON REPAIRS TO MANSION

Your Chairman of House and Grounds reports progress at this time on (1) the purchase of a fine old iron fence, in keeping with the original appearance of the property, to be installed and painted after the wall which supports the fence is put in condition to maintain it. (2) The repairs to the house are being carefully investi-

gated and an estimate is being submitted at an early date, so that repairs may be completed before the hard weather starts later in the year.

This is a complete survey, and the Committee is hopeful that repairs, including necessary preservative painting, may be completed.

- - - Beatrice A. Maher

OF REPORTS THERE IS NO END!

The following letter, recently addressed by your president to the executive director of the Community Chest, describes a problem that is prevalent in libraries.

"The Society's Library is faced with a decision regarding the acquisition, cataloging and storage of periodic and occasional reports prepared by the various agencies of the Community Chest. Our space limitations make it necessary to weigh carefully the usefulness and the duplication in other libraries of all material considered for acquisition.

I would appreciate information from you concerning the policies followed by each Chest agency in preparing reports and preserving them as a running history of the organization. If the agencies maintain their own files of these reports and provide the Chest office with copies, also the Public Library, it would seem unnecessary for the Society to duplicate these collections.

It may be that some of the agencies have not considered the importance of such an historical record. Their reports may be scattered in their files. It occurs to me that the job of assembling and organizing their historical record is an important one."

For Your Information

The Society's telephone number is
Gibson 3-1209
The Mansion is open Tuesday through
Saturday from 1 to 4

Custodians in residence:
Mr. and Mrs. Sidney Holmes.

Secretary and Curator:
Miss Helen I. Fraser.

From The New London County Historical
Society, Shaw Mansion
11 Blinman Street
New London, Connecticut

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